

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) successfully incorporated language to the FY '08 Homeland Security spending bill to help border communities address border security in today's Homeland Security Appropriations committee meeting. The bill was reported to the full committee and will be acted on after Memorial Day, after which it will be brought to the entire House of Representatives for passage.

"This is the first step towards providing much needed resources to the communities and law enforcement agencies along the border," said Congressman Rodriguez. "I am proud that working with Chairman Price we were able to include \$15 million in grant funding for local communities along the border to address the growing problem of drug smuggling and human trafficking. An integral part of our much needed immigration reform is strong and smart border control - that includes supporting border law enforcement and incorporating the local expertise of our border communities."

The full Homeland Security appropriations funding bill provides \$36 billion to support federal agencies engaged in ensuring homeland security, including Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE). The Rodriguez language specifically authorizes \$15 million in DHS grants through the "Operation Stonegarden" program to border communities for cracking down on drug smuggling and human trafficking. These grants are not for local enforcement of Federal immigration law. Congressman Rodriguez also included language that requires DHS to consult with state and local communities before any funds are expended on tactical fencing or infrastructure.

Homeland Security FY '08 Bill highlights:

- Rodriguez language: \$15 million for "Operation Stonegarden" to assist border communities with anti-drug smuggling and human trafficking efforts. President Bush had zeroed out this program for FY '08;
- Rodriguez language: Requires DHS to formally consult with state and local communities to solicit their advice and support before spending funds on tactical fencing or infrastructure;
- \$36 billion in DHS funding in overall bill -- 5% above the President's request;
- 3,000 additional Border Patrol agents. Congressman Rodriguez serves on the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security.